

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for transferring a microplate having a plurality of wells arranged in a matrix of lengthwise and crosswise rows relative to stationary dispenser nozzles spaced at regular intervals in the crosswise direction for dispensing a liquid matter into the wells, the number of the nozzles being smaller than the number of the wells in each crosswise row of the microplate comprising:

a support plate on which the microplate is mounted;

a means for transferring the support plate forward and backward in the lengthwise direction; and

a means for shifting the support plate in the crosswise direction between a first position in which each of the odd or even wells in crosswise rows of the microplate is aligned with correspondingly one of the nozzles in the lengthwise direction, respectively, and a second position in which each of the even or odd wells in crosswise rows of the microplate is aligned with correspondingly one of the nozzles in the lengthwise direction, respectively.

2. An apparatus of claim 1, wherein the number of the nozzles corresponds to half the number of the wells in a crosswise row of the microplate.

3. An apparatus of claim 1 or 2, wherein the shifting means comprises:

one or more guide members to guide the support plate in the crosswise direction;

one or more elastic members operative to keep the support plate in the first position and to urge the support plate in the second position back to the first position;

a means for moving the support plate in the first position toward the second position along the guide members and against the force of the elastic members after dispensing a liquid matter to all wells aligned with the nozzles

in the lengthwise direction in the first position;

a means for locking the support plate in the second position when the support plate is being moved by the moving means; and

a means for releasing the locking of the support plate in the second position after dispensing a liquid matter to all wells aligned with the nozzles in the lengthwise direction in the second position.

4. An apparatus of claim 3, wherein the moving means comprises a roller rotatably attached to the support plate and a diverting member for diverting the support plate from the lengthwise direction to the crosswise direction by contacting with the roller.

5. An apparatus of claim 3, wherein the locking means comprises an opening or a recess formed in the support plate, a stopper which can be inserted into the opening when the support plate is in the second position, and a spring always urging the stopper to move toward the opening.

6. An apparatus of claim 5, wherein the releasing means comprises an engagement member which can pull out the stopper from the opening against the force of the spring.